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DANTE AND POLISH ROMANTICISM.

THERE were several excellent reasons why the fascination of Dante should not be lost upon Polish Romanticism. To exiles he appealed as an exile, to patriots as a patriot ; hearts inclined to mysticism acclaimed in him the visionary ; minds steeped in the Catholic traditions felt his attraction as the great Catholic poet. The exaltation of Woman, by Dante, had its counterpart in the Romantic cult of love.

By its subject and its artistry alike, the *Divine Comedy* appealed strongest ; and, next, came *La Vita Nuova*. For the purposes of this article it will be sufficient to limit the discussion to the influence of these two works.

The Polish Romantics read Dante in the original ; and some of them (Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid) translated portions of the *Divine Comedy*. It would therefore seem, that some Dantesque reminiscences should naturally occur in their original work, but, in fact, we look for them largely in vain. There is, no doubt, the outstanding fact of the profound spiritual kinship between Mickiewicz and Dante. Common to both of them were the same powerful mystical promptings ; both these poets sought to attain saintliness in their lives, and both were intensely, passionately patriotic. Both strove to reach beyond the visible on wings of imagination and faith, and triumphantly made away with the frontier between the world of the living and the world of the dead ;—but there are very few actual reminiscences to point out.

Such traces of Dante's influence as may be found in Mickiewicz's poetry are limited to only one of his works : to his fantastic drama *Forefathers' Eve*, part III (*Dziady*, część III), where Satan struggles with God for the mastery of the world, while Konrad the poet fights God to wrest from Him the power to set Poland free. The solution is worked out in the heart of Father Peter, the humble priest, upon whom the grace of revelation descends. He is allowed to see, in a mystic vision, the future saviour of his country, whose name is Forty Four, just as that of Italy's

saviour, in the prophecy of Beatrice (*The Purgatory*, XXXIII), is Five Hundred Ten and Five.¹

When Konrad the prisoner-poet revolts against God in a Promethean improvisation and hangs between Heaven and Hell in mental agony, his mother's prayer is offered up for him—as that of Beatrice is offered for Dante's soul. Through these intercessions the assistance of heavenly spirits is won for the sinners, to enable them to withstand temptations. When this help proves ineffectual, Konrad's heavenly guardians give him over to the enemy, that he may through suffering in solitude come to a better understanding of God's ways. Similarly Beatrice shows her beloved Hell and Purgatory, so that he may be purified from sins and faults. All the leading personages in Mickiewicz's drama are subject to the influence of spirits, good and evil. The ecstasies in which Father Peter and a young girl called Eva sense the fragrance, light, and music of the world beyond, remind us of the experiences of Dante in the highest spheres of Purgatory and Heaven. The souls that, by Guślarz's (the Wizard's) incantation appear flame-like on All Souls' Eve, and take on in their flight the shape of doves, do not differ in this from Dante's spirits. The sufferings of the damned Baykow are the same as those of Jacopo di Sant' Andrea, whom dogs tear to pieces. Again, the devils who molest the characters of Mickiewicz's drama in their dreaming and their waking, resemble the horned devils of the eighth region of Hell. The Polish poet, however, chose to follow the folk-lore tradition, and bestowed more comic traits upon the citizens of the Pit, especially in the ludicrous scene in which the Evil One is exorcised. Generally, the influence of Dante's poem may also to a certain extent account sometimes for the final shape which the ideas of Mickiewicz took in his drama and for the colouring of its scenes.

In a different way the influence of Dante was reflected in the love-poem: *In Switzerland*, by Julius Słowacki. Here an exquisite paraphrase of the episode of Paolo and Francesca, ending however on the idyllic note, is a conscious adaptation of that fragment of the *Divine Comedy* and possibly of Byron's translation of it.

The love story develops on the lines of the theory of love laid down by Dante in the *Vita Nuova*. The beloved of the poet, as visualised by him, seems to be scarcely a creature of

¹ *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III., was printed in a translation into English verse by Dorothea Prall Radin, edited by George Rapall Noyes, in the *Slavonic Review*, Vol. III., p. 499, and Vol. IV., p. 42.

this world ; it is as if she were an ethereal being walking the earth only for a while before she returns to her heavenly home. Like Beatrice, she is modest, angelic, a saved soul. She possesses a charm to which man and nature are sensible. Love suddenly overcomes the poet. At first it is rapture and contemplation, and then adoration and prayer. His bliss makes him almost lose consciousness. An emotion so absorbing and rare has for its ever-present shadow the fear of some catastrophe overtaking the lovers—such a fear as haunts the couple in the *Vita Nuova*. And in both poems the catastrophe actually comes, though we are not told of the fact, but it is revealed by the bitter sorrow into which the lovers are plunged, lamenting their dead loves. The pain of that loss is expressed, as in Dante's poem, by tears, by a clinging to despair and a yearning for solitude and death. There is, moreover, a similarity in composition between *Vita Nuova* and the Polish poem, which consists of twenty-one fragments resembling canzones or sonnets.

The spell of Dante's poem has not however affected the originality of Słowacki's own poetic conception, carried out through a wonderful series of love episodes, ranging from pure transports to sensual ecstasies, and projected against the background of the Swiss mountain scenery. In the sensual element lay the cause of the catastrophe. The problem was, therefore, different from that presented in the *Vita Nuova* ; and it was given a different artistic solution. What was of Dante in this poem was its emotional key and the adoption of the Dantean theory of love by the Polish author.

Apart from these individual creative responses to the stimulus of Dante's poetry, from 1834 on it was becoming a fashion in Polish literature to view contemporary mankind as passing through historical stages corresponding to the Hell and Purgatory of the Dantean vision. This doctrine had for its starting-point Zygmunt Krasiński's social drama : *The Undivine Comedy*,—a title which, like that other one, *Comédie Humaine*, adopted by Balzac for a series of his novels, was reminiscent of the Italian model. Vast visions of the horrors of revolution, of the proletarian hordes streaming on from an abyss against the last stronghold of the aristocrats, as if to the forum of the Last Judgment, rank with Dante's evocations of Hell.

Already when he wrote this youthful masterpiece of his, Krasiński planned to depict the earthly Hell in another work, modelled on that of Dante. The idea was embodied first in the prose poem *Herburt* which, redrafted, was afterwards styled *The*

Dream (Sen), and was conceived as a part of a more comprehensive composition. But, although he made earth the scene of action, he preferred a fantastic to the realistic method. The Youth is plunged into sleep by the working of a spell, cast over him by Aliger, his friend. Before he loses consciousness, the Youth recognises Aliger as Dante. Thus strangely dissociated from physical existence, they set out to a new land where they find embodiments of all earthly evil. There are no roads nor human settlements in it, but only rocks, chasms, dungeons and fantastic granite edifices.

Out of the twilight and fog which dominate the scene, figures of victims and hangmen emerge, there appear soldiers, cleaning their rifles to the rhythm of the words of command, no better than slaves in their readiness to kill their own fathers and brothers if so ordered ; artisans chained to their machines and dying from the fatigue of toil ; spies plying their revolting trade ; leaders of the working masses, selling their blood to the " merchants " ; stock-exchange swindlers and crowds blind with passion ; women outraged ; and above all this, the sacred watchwords and the figure of the Crucified. Dante, the sage, shudders at the sight of European culture at this stage of degeneration, and declares that " the Hell of the men of the old world did not cause me such pain."

There is no such thing as a just punishment in the earthly Hell ; there are only the monstrosities of Crime and Wrong. The wrongdoers are lords of this world. Suffering is meted out only to their victims. Dante explains to his disciple that there is no immortality for those who have degraded themselves on earth by subordinating spirit to flesh. There is no endorsement for this idea in the *Divine Comedy*, where even the greatest criminals continue their spiritual existence, sometimes even without losing certain qualities of greatness. Their punishment is suffering.

Dante's method, when depicting Hell, was to produce realistic scenes and to leave the explanation of their deeper meaning to Virgil. Krasinski, while selecting earthly realities hellish in their quality, was never realistic ; he was always preoccupied with the symbolic meaning. This is strikingly instanced by the forest of crosses, comparing with the wood of the suicides in the Dantean " Inferno." A totally different significance is attached to the sufferings of the crucified victims in the Polish poem. This is expiation, an earthly purgatory of a whole nation. The cross was a symbol throughout the whole Polish martyrology.

After passing in review embodiments of evil and wrong, Krasiński concludes his poem with a message and a warning. Dante, so far a merciless critic of the European culture in its degeneration, now assumes the prophetic mantle. He foretells that the rebirth of humanity will be achieved by a determined effort of the Poles to rise superior to Evil. Thus he becomes an exponent of Krasiński's own views and hopes.

The idea of earthly Hell and Purgatory has inspired two works by Julius Słowacki. One of them, *Posielenie* (*The Settlement*) has remained a mere fragment, the other, *Anhelli*, is a prose poem of Siberia, the land of exile.

In *Posielenie* the poet planned to introduce the figure of Dante as a guide through the earthly Hell and the Hell beyond. In the first he was to depict the sufferings of the Poles, in the second—the punishment meted out to their Russian oppressors. Finally, however, he gave up the idea, and beyond sketching a detailed plan for the work, wrote nothing except two fragments in *terze rime*, stating his relation to Dante and announcing that he was to describe wanderings through regions beyond the world.

More fully the idea of an earthly Hell was developed by him in *Anhelli*. The title gives the name of the youth who, under guidance of one Szaman,¹ king of the Siberian people, passes through the land of the exiles, sharing their lot until he dies, a pure sacrifice for the nation's future. Szaman shows him more sympathy and friendliness than Virgil bestowed upon Dante, for Anhelli is a truly angelic soul, anxious to suffer with the sufferers without any fault of his own. The dire, strength-consuming labours of the Polish exile; the agony of the father who, like Ugolino, had lived upon his sons' bodies when pressed by a loose boulder to the rock in a mine; the dead who asked about the living and vanished into their graves again upon hearing heart-breaking news—these themes are decidedly in keeping with the tradition of the Dantean Hell.

In keeping with it, too, is the colour scheme of the Siberian mines. Grey, black and flaming red are dominant. The mellow and soothing star-influence is another transposition of a motive borrowed from the *Divine Comedy*, though the colour-scheme is here much enriched in the process. Despite analogies in scenes of suffering and the tendency to transpose the Dantean Hell into earthly surroundings, the prevailing note is gentle—a gentle sadness; and white is the dominating colour effect throughout—an effect characteristic of the Siberian plains and

¹ The word in Siberia means a heathen priest or wizard.—ED.

also suggestive of Anhelli's purity of soul. The land of exile being conceived symbolically, there is hardly an air of reality about it ; it is the idealogical aspect that is stressed throughout.

Life changes into a Hell for *Wacław* (Wenceslas), the personage from whom another poem by Słowacki has been named. It is, however, one of Słowacki's less important works. *Wacław*, the traitor to the national cause, is a victim to abominable sufferings, and yet manages to preserve some qualities of greatness—like some mighty sinners among the damned of the Dantean Hell.

Suffering, which in the conception of a Hell on earth bears no relation to guilt, has been the dominant motive in many of Słowacki's works. The tragic gruesomeness of such themes as the extinction of a whole family or of a whole nation, Słowacki himself associated with the Dantean conception of Hell ; but in their treatment he was entirely independent of the Italian master, and these works of his show no reminiscences of the *Divine Comedy*.

The Dantean connection is alluded to by Cyprian Norwid, a poet of the later Romantic period, in his poem *Niewola* (*Bondage*), in which he describes himself as entering the darkness of the Polish tombs to look for life therein : " To the tombs of a great people I go down—without a Virgil for a companion." The solitary pilgrimage of the poet is intended as a challenge of the right of physical force to dominate a free nation. He denounces the worship of mere form and protests against its being imposed on free spirits. He does not, however, promise his fellow countrymen a miraculous recovery of independence, but demands from them stoutness of heart and mature action. Political subjection is symbolical of Hell in this reflective poem.

More ironical and light-hearted has been the treatment of a kindred theme in another work by Norwid, *Za Kulisami* (*Behind the Scenes*). Here, the modern world is Hell, for " there are in it no fellow-creatures, no human beings ; there are only studies of the human heart."

Thus the idea of a terrestrial Hell was specially popular with the Polish Romantics and was repeatedly developed by them in a whole series of works ; but one also finds certain reflexions of it in some literary productions of later periods. The poem *Na posąg Dantego* (*To a statue of Dante*), written by Teofil Lenartowicz in 1865, deserves mention in this connection. Again the earthly Hell is held to be more terrible than the one that Dante had known. Here are the untold sufferings of the oppressed nations, and Europe one grave from the Alps to the Dvina. Gates of

Hell closed on Poland, while for a crowning mockery, false messages of hope are sent to the condemned. A similar view was expressed by Stanislas Wyspiański, the painter and poet, author of the drama : *Wesele* (*The Wedding*, 1901). In it, again the lot of the Poles is compared to that of the damned ; and the figure of a traitor to the national cause, who meets the eternal punishment allotted to him with scorn and courage, reminds one of the potentates of the *Inferno*.

To the sufferings of the nation, as depicted by Krasieński in *The Dream*, a purifying quality was attached, as of Purgatory. The same spiritual purpose underlay the Siberian Calvary of the political exiles, as presented in Słowacki's *Anhelli*. Here a symbol is introduced by the poet, an apple-tree as representative of the national life. In Dante's *Purgatory* the symbol of the tree is twice used ; there is the tree of atonement, giving encouragement to resist temptations, and there is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil denuded of leaves and flowers, and miraculously transformed through the grace of Christ. In *Anhelli*, the apple-tree is a symbol of the nation's life. It is in the enemy's control only until man's spiritual power changes it into a tree blossoming with stars. Both Dantean symbols, therefore, apparently, contributed to the poet's idea of the approaching rebirth of Poland.

The doctrines of evolution and purification to which the Polish Romantics inclined, prompted them to indulge in visionary poems of a terrestrial paradise. In so many works by the Romantics the belief is cherished that God's Kingdom may be established on earth. There is a distinct connection between *The Divine Comedy* and Krasieński's patriotic poem *Przedświt* (*Dawn*). The motive first touched upon is that of the terrestrial Hell : " Exiled by the enemy from the land of my fathers, I had to walk among strangers and heard from afar the howlings of those Satans who put my country in chains ;—like Dante, I walked alive through Hell." From the despair, into which he sank on brooding over his country's misfortunes, he is rescued by a woman, a second Beatrice. To him she means company in life and sorrow, a source of hope and inspiration. Not she, but Poland, however, is the chief heroine of the poem. Poland, sovereign in the past, latent among the ideals of the contemporary age, certain to rise again, superior to the test of the grave.

Krasieński's view harmonises the belief in humanity's rebirth on earth with the belief in the metaphysical Heaven. Between the earthly and the celestial, there is no clear distinction in his

poem. Both spheres seem linked up to his ecstatic vision, which reads into the future of this world and the next. The difference is that Dante visualised only the individual saved souls, Krasiński visualised nations.

The vision of the celestial harp, vibrating light and music, and supposed to be the symbol of mankind, brings to mind some of the scenes of the *Paradiso*; but a special interpretation is to be placed upon it. The celestial harmonies of light and sound are marred by a discord which is never heard in Dante's *Paradiso*. The name of Poland is no more vibrated forth by the harp of life, and the resulting discord produces a parallel disturbance in the harmonies of Heaven.

Krasiński kneels before the ghosts of ancestors, passing in a procession reflecting the splendour of the old-time Poland—as Dante kneels when addressed by the Pope Hadrian V. A similar warning is passed to both of them; not to indulge in facile criticism of the dead, for God's ways must remain a mystery to mortals. The admonishment is given to Dante by the Eagle. The vision of Poland transfigured whom the other nations recognise as their leader makes one think of Beatrice proceeding through Purgatory amid light and song, in a cloud of flowers. The resemblance in effects is indeed very strong. The nations, rapt in contemplation, worshipping Poland's spiritual beauty—here is another motive of the *Paradiso*. Dante's poem supplied also the argument for the theory of love radiating from Poland on to the whole of humanity. The more it is drawn upon, the stronger it becomes. It is unimpaired by distribution, as it is subject only to the law of celestial interpenetration. The vision ends with Poland's ascension, which reminds one of the progress of Dante to the Eighth Heaven. There follows a description of the view obtained from the heavenly heights, and the poem concludes with a prophecy about the world's future, based upon the Dantean conception of the discordant elements reconciled, and the supreme harmony realised in Paradise. The evocation, by an ecstatic imagination, of Paradise descending upon earth, of humanity transmuted and rid of sin, the revelation of Poland's and the world's future, there is about all this that quality which emanates from Dante's *Paradiso*.

The reflection, in this life, of the trichotomous principle underlying the structure of the world beyond, is the subject of Krasiński's *Psalm Wiary* (*Psalm of Faith*). He points out that progress, of individuals and humanity alike, leads "through the hell of toil—through the purgatory of striving for merit." In

moments of inspiration, men are enabled to envisage celestial happiness. Thus Heaven may be anticipated. Again Paradise is evoked by the poet in a series of rapid visions, which produce the effect of "conflagrations of sonority and radiance."

Dante's *Paradiso* was often drawn upon by the Polish Romantics for facts about the world beyond. No one of them drank deeper of this source than Cyprian Norwid. It is highly characteristic of him that contemplation of death is always associated in his mind with thoughts of Heaven. All progress, as he understands it, means essentially moving towards God. Of Heaven he thinks naturally in Dantean scenes, his fancy clinging fondly to such model images as the celestial harp, the ladder of light or the cross of flames. In the dedication to the beautiful dialogue on art, *Promethidion*, he fixes a meeting with a dead friend of his in Dante's paradise. "On the trail of white suns, on the trail that is endless, pouring forth in a cascade of creation from God's enormous breast, then branching off, and shaping itself into a flaming cross."

There was another stimulus also in *The Divine Comedy*, to which Polish poetry reacted. At least two beautiful Polish poems, essentially prayers, have been inspired by the meditations and prayers in which Dante pondered the mysteries of the faith. The two are: *Psalm dobrej woli* (*The Psalm of the Good Will*), by Krasiński, and *Litanja do Matki Boskiej* (*The Litany to the Mother of God*), by Norwid. Both are chiefly connected with St. Bernard's prayer, beseeching Mary to undertake mediation before God (*The Paradise*, XXXIII).

The Psalm of the Good Will is a prayer offered for the nation and reflecting the patriotic yearnings of the poet on the one hand, and his philosophy of history, on the other. The prayer develops a theological argument, the whole gist of which is a testimony to the lasting impression left on Krasiński's mind by the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. As suggested by the title, the Good Will—termed "good" by Dante for its agreeability with God's will—the will proper to angels and saved spirits—is the subject of Krasiński's poem. As a result of his wanderings beyond the world, Dante came to regard man's freedom to make his choice as his dearest possession, his pride, his only road to merit. This fundamental right of man is commented upon and explained by the saved spirits. The point Krasiński stresses here is the triumph of liberty. The pure spirits made it clear to Dante that man's infirmities and shortcomings render it impossible for him to clear away, by his own effort, the effects of original sin. God's help

is essential for the purpose. But for the granting of this grace, good will and merit are the requisite conditions. On this ground Krasiński prays the Creator to bestow His grace on Poland: for was she not true to her historical mission, that of the rampart of Christianity? Through Mary, St. Bernard beseeches God to bestow grace on Dante. The mediation of Mary is similarly invoked by Krasiński; especially because of the traditions of Polish chivalry, in which the cult of Mary was the central idea. There is a nobility about Krasiński's poem, admirably harmonising with the grandeur of the view that the moral forces of a nation, which ultimately decide its fate, themselves need a supernatural buttress—the assistance of divine grace.

A closer connection exists between St. Bernard's prayer and *The Litany to the Mother of God*, by Norwid, though the latter work derives also from some other cantos of the *Paradiso*. These are responsible for the doctrine of the constant working of grace in Man's life, and of the subjective freedom granted to Man by the Creator as a token of His respect for His creature; but an even more vital link is ecstasy, which spiritualises both Norwid and Dante and makes them melt into the Supreme Power. This approach to God is achieved by Dante and Norwid through the help of Mary, who has been made indispensable in the scheme of salvation and has also rendered it possible for men to approach the greatness of the Son of God. This motive is enlarged upon by Norwid. Through Incarnation, God the Infinite and Inaccessible has drawn closer to man and become easier to approach and apprehend. This is the meaning of the miracle of Mary's intermediacy. The Polish poet has lent an additional solemnity to his theme by repeating the list of the excellences of the Holy Mary as it runs in the Church litany, while enveloping it with the atmosphere of Dantesque ecstasy. Last, he prays Mary as Queen of the Polish Crown, to intercede for the Polish nation.

Not only did Norwid assimilate the beliefs and the religious doctrines held by Dante, but he wanted to amplify, and also in a certain measure to correct, the tenets of his master. The intention was apparent already in the first of his works that was marked by the influence of Dante. This was the poem *To Brother Ludwik* (*Do brata Ludwika*, 1844), where the author, refusing to accept the lesson of his own bitter experiences and to succumb to despair which has well-nigh closed upon him, tries to reconcile himself to earthly existence by apprehending its limitations and acknowledging the positive value of life. He fights down disappointment, and although tested by misfortune,

maintains his pride, which is that of a lord of the world. Alluding to those regions of the other world which Dante made his own, he says, assuming himself to be mankind's spokesman : " Though we control but atoms, command but dreams, let us be glad of this our realm and enjoy our rule. There is so much that is wonderful in just the ordinary. . . . "

Dante attributed the imperfection of human actions to the inevitable limitations of earthly existence. In Norwid, the painful consciousness of the necessities to which all humans are subjected, leads to the injunction " to take all joy that is permitted to men, and of sorrow as much as is forced on them. To see clearly that a wild rose is cut down for the sake of a few ears of corn—and still to persist in the belief that it must be so. "

Norwid's poetry manages to convey wonderfully the inadequacy of earthly existence, and the pathos of humanity's aspirations towards the standards of metaphysical ideals. There is a double thread in a good many of Norwid's works. He fully accepts the point of view of Dante ; but, while recognising the futility of earthly existence, he teaches humanity to overcome it by earnestness in endeavour. He is a prophet of civilisation, of achievement wrought in the teeth of the hostile forces of Nature and Time. It is a favourite theme with him to mark off the human measure, setting it against the infinities of time and the futilities of matter.

The Dantean conceptions of the Paradise and the Earth are further reflected in the extant fragments of Norwid's poem *Ziemia* (*The Earth*), planned between 1847 and 1850. The opening portions indicate his intention to complete the Dantean scheme of things : " The darkness of Hell, the twilight of Purgatory, the radiance of Heaven—this is not all : there is Earth besides. " . . . Earth, the region of pain, where the just are solitary sufferers, nailed to their invisible crosses.

A citizen of two worlds, the visible and the invisible, man must, in his terrestrial existence, lean back for safety against the chilly palm of Truth. Further on, the poet recalls the discords to which led his meetings with a woman unwilling and unable to understand his mournful soul. In vain he was telling her he had come " from the avenue of graves, from the city of Pompei. " The spectacle of the dead city was to his mind (and this was repeated by him in some of his other works) as it were a stage representation of the drama of humanity.

Closely related to this work is the poem : *Człowiek* (*Man*), exhorting man to see himself as a neighbour to God and to refuse

to submit to the forces which rule matter. The work of the spirit would then transmute this earth into a road leading to the Ark of the saved souls. The triumphs of the spirit hammering matter till it assumes such shape as man wills; the Phidias-like achievements of the artist; the reforging of the earth by efforts of conscience—these are the supreme human tasks on earth, a gospel not unconnected with the *Divine Comedy*.

Thus to the three spheres depicted in the Dantean poem, a fourth has been added by Norwid: the earth; and the double aspect of earthly existence furnished one of his main themes.

Apart from the idea that earthly realities might be presented on the lines of the *Divine Comedy*, some connection might be conjectured between this poem and those works of the Romantics which transfer the plane of action to regions beyond the world. A poem by Lenartowicz, styled *Zachwycenie* (*The Ecstasy*), tells of a peasant woman who, while in lethargy, has wandered through heaven, purgatory and hell and discovered that everything the folk songs and fairy tales told about them was true. The homely dress of this poem stands in marked contrast to the grand style of the *Divine Comedy*, though in the scenes of Paradise as depicted by Lenartowicz a few minor resemblances with the Italian poem may be detected.

A different departure was that of Słowacki in his poem *Poema Piasta Dantyszka o piekle* (*Piast Dantiscus's poem of Hell*), which was a deliberate attempt at a grotesque. Dantyszek, an average representative of the mass of Polish gentry, is held up to satire. He is an object both of sympathy and irony on the part of the author, who occasionally puts into his mouth some of his own reflections and remarks. This incongruity appreciably contributes to the grotesque effect of the work. Słowacki's plan was to lend a Dantesque air to a fantastic satire on the Tsarist Russia. The torments to which the Tsars are subjected in hell remind one of the *Inferno*, though bathos is frequently achieved owing to the irreverent outbursts of Dantyszek. He slashes at enemies of his country with his sabre, and flings before him the heads of his dead sons, to ensure himself free passage. His impatient, violent nature prevents him from finishing his journey at God's throne. There is a lack of reticence in this poem which makes the scenes of sufferings abominable reading, and a complete disregard of all probability. The effects have been exaggerated. The work is in places absolutely repulsive; in others it contrives to make a powerful patriotic appeal.

Once more did Słowacki invite comparison with Dante, but

this time it was when his own genius rose to the supreme heights of poetical power in the poem, gigantic in every sense of the word, *Król-Duch* (*King Spirit*). In this mystical biography of the King Spirit of Poland, capable of incarnation in the leaders of the nation, Słowacki discarded the idea of a trichotomous structure of the world beyond. Sufficient to him then to believe in the purifying power of suffering. He rejected the dogma of the existence of Hell. Consequently, there is no eternal punishment for the heroes of his poem, though every guilt has to be redeemed with suffering. It is not physical pain that is inflicted as it was in the *Divine Comedy*—the torments are spiritual; it is the loss of all energy and capacity for action coupled with a keen perception of the effects of the wrong done. A few slight traces of the Dantean influence are to be noticed in the imagery of the poem.

To sum up, the influence Dante exercised on Polish Romanticism was reflected in several tendencies. There was the conception of a terrestrial Hell and Purgatory, where Poland's sufferings were in the nature of expiation. This was the most popular idea. Further there arose the longing for a terrestrial paradise, which sought expression in visions of the days to come. Prayers were written in which meditations on truths, religious and patriotic, were an important feature. Nearest by their subjects to the Italian model came two poems: the one about Dantyszek in hell, and the other about the three regions of the world beyond, as seen through peasant eyes. Complementary to the Dantean poem was a series of Norwid's works, treating of Earth and Man. The really worthy counterpart of the *Divine Comedy*, in Polish Romantic literature, was Słowacki's poem: *King Spirit*, otherwise but slightly related to Dante's work through minor resemblances of artistic detail.

Polish literature was affected above all by the ideas, and also by the atmosphere and the colour-schemes in Dante's poem. Sensibility to form was remarkable in Mickiewicz's work. Słowacki was quicker to react to light and colour. The same, though to a lesser degree, was also true of Krasiński. Favoured by all of them were scenes of symbolic meaning. Krasiński and Norwid gave priority to abstract reasonings, meditating upon theological arguments and contemplating the mysteries of human existence. Thus the influence of Dante was exercised in several directions and in all of them it proved far from unimportant.

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